

INDIAN MISSIONS

Obligations and Opportunities

Report of the Committee on Indian Missions
Home Missions Council
January, 1919



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*Report of the Committee on Indian Missions Presented at
the Annual Meeting of the Home Missions Council,
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The momentous events of war and of restored peace have not left the American Indians out of the stream of influence and of patriotic service, although the native American race has not assumed national prominence in the great conflict. In proportion to the total population the Indians have done more than their share, both in voluntary enlistments, in valorous service and in response to financial and food-saving demands of the Government. Three-fourths of the red men who have served in army and navy have been volunteers. Two of the majors of the army and every rank below this grade and every line of activity of privates have represented the Indians among the 8,000 estimated to be in service. This is a striking and unmistakable sign of the transformation of old Indian hostility and aloofness and isolation from national affairs and an evidence that patriotism has been intense and the response to the call of country has been spontaneous from this younger generation of the red men.

The close of the war will see the status and conditions of the Indians greatly improved we may confidently believe. A grateful government and people will not now withhold from them their rights as free men under the constitution. The experience, military drill and discipline, the travel and association with other men on terms of equality will be invaluable to them. Their outlook will be enlarged, their understanding of their white brothers will be made more just and appreciative, their knowledge of history and the world vastly broadened.

A review of the past year in Indian Mission interests gives renewed cause for gratitude and hope. Progress has been made along the lines approved by the Home Missions Council in relation to overlapping and overlooking on the Indian

fields. It is gratifying to report that each of the six instances of supposed lack of comity or of efficiency in the division of field has been investigated.

The Presbyterian (U. S. A.) Board will not commission a resident missionary for the Stockbridge Mission field in Wisconsin for the present, and opportunity will thus be afforded to determine whether the Lutheran Church will adequately provide for these Indians. A visit by the representative of the Home Missions Council to the Arapahoe Wyoming field revealed the fact that the Protestant Episcopal and Presbyterian (U. S. A.) missions are located quite a distance apart, and that the Presbyterian work should include a large number of families of whites and lessees of Indian lands, so that the excellent church and mission buildings at Arapahoe can be advantageously used without in any way duplicating the effort of the Episcopal Mission. It appears that on this field the Methodist Episcopal Church is also doing some Sunday school work and negotiations are under way to reach an understanding with this denomination.

The instance of the Nez Perce fields of Idaho does not call for any further special attention, as it is believed among the workers among these Indians that two denominations on the field will be adjusted naturally to the existing conditions and this Christian tribe will receive thorough nurture in the faith. Among the Iroquois in New York State careful investigation has been made by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and the apparent overlapping and unnecessary expenditure of missionary effort and money, particularly on the Cattaraugus Reservation, is being adjusted by interdenominational conference and reciprocal exchange. This leaves only two cases of possible lack of comity for which we could wish further negotiations and re-adjustment. We commend to the churches at work on these two fields, namely the Winnebago of Nebraska, and the Arrikara of North Dakota, that further efforts be made to leave each of these fields to a single denomination. This will exemplify the spirit of our common Christianity and will make the American Indian mission work an example of perfect comity and fraternal co-operation, which will be a testimony for the faith and a realization of the "unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

Regarding the neglected Indians, reports have been received from the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which sent out

Rev. E. E. Higley to ascertain the exact needs on some of the fields assigned to that church. The American Baptist Home Mission Board has increased its Indian Missions, and the Presbyterian (U. S. A.) Board of Home Missions has provided an appropriation for its resident missionary at Browning, Montana, for a part of the neglected Blackfeet Indians, and will arrange for two other small bands which were assigned to it in Washington and Arizona. The neglected Pueblos of New Mexico and the scattered Indians of Northern California are still most urgently requiring evangelical church effort.

Attention is called to the need of continuing the investigation and gathering of detailed information regarding the Indians who are without resident missionaries or church privileges. Certainly a gratifying advance has been made in the last few years in reaching the long neglected pagans of the native American race.

Our eyes are directed now to the millions of the native stocks in densest paganism in Mexico, Central and South America, to whom our Indian converts to the Christian faith in the United States should become missionaries in the course of the years.

A Committee on Religious Work in Indian schools, composed of the members of the Home Missions Council and the Council of Women for Home Missions, was appointed several years ago. The work in both government and mission schools was especially commended to the attention of these institutions. We commend again the need of larger attention to this religious educational problem in order that the Indian schools of the country may be cared for religiously in a more adequate way and the large privileges which the Office of Indian Affairs affords to all of the churches may be utilized more effectively.

The Hayden Bill to suppress the liquor and peyote evils has been favorably acted upon by the House of Representatives and has been referred to the Indian Committee of the Senate, Hon. Henry F. Ashurst, Chairman. The prospect is brighter than ever before, that the bill, which has the approval of the Indian Office, may be passed. Letters to Senators, advocating the passage of the bill introduced by Congressman Hayden, are very much needed at the present time. The Indian Rights Association and the Society of American Indians are waging a vigorous campaign in behalf of this legislation.

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the Hon. Cato Sells, in his Annual Report recently from the press, has again expressed the estimation in which the missionary service of the churches is held by his office. He states:

"The events and experiences of the year have deepened my appreciation of the earnest labors and helpful co-operation of missionaries at large and throughout the field. The period has been one of unusual affiliation in purpose and methods of work among all agencies, both individual and organized, for the spiritual and moral betterment of the Indians, and has reflected the broad fraternity of aim and effort so clearly developed by the great unity of our American cause in the relief of war-stricken nations. I am sincerely grateful for all that has been achieved through individual philanthropy and denominational endeavor."

This attitude of the Honorable Commissioner is very gratifying and the reciprocal relations between governmental and mission representatives should be cultivated in the spirit of good will and mutual service.

It is with regret that a serious defect in the federal administration of Indian affairs again requires protest. The Indian Office is still failing in its policies relating to sectarian schools, not only having neglected to expend the \$300,000 voted by Congress for Indian school buildings, but having agreed to new contracts for sectarian schools including one for pupils on the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming, upon application of the Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Action of the Home Missions Council in relation to this un-American practice and an approach to the Secretary of the Interior again protesting against this administrative policy are suggested.

A statement of the larger interests of the Indian mission work, of our united Protestant forces may be timely, and serve a definite purpose at this juncture. A comprehensive program and method of service, viewing the interests of the cause in the large, seem to be called for.

1. As the Indians of our country are still to a very considerable number in a rather primitive state, without a written or printed native language and unfamiliar with English, evangelization and individual effort in their behalf are urgent. Our latest estimate indicates that over 47,000 Indians in eighteen states are at the present time unsupplied with religious oversight and Christian instruction. The

action of the Home Missions Council in assigning these tribes and communities to denominational care, is full of promise if this obligation is taken seriously and efforts made without delay to remedy this long time neglect. As Dr. Arnup of Canada has so forcibly stated:

"This is work which must be done. Whatever we may do in measuring ourselves and our resources against the world need—and the present opportunity abroad, this primary obligation must be discharged. Obligation rather than opportunity constitutes the church's call to evangelize the Indian in the fullest meaning of the word."

2. The educational work for the children and youth of the Indians does not devolve wholly upon the Government, and more and more our Christian leaders of experience and the chairman of committees of various denominations are realizing that the educational work must go hand-in-hand with evangelization. Examples of very successful schools, to mention only a few, are Bacone College of the Baptist Church in Oklahoma; the Winnebago School of the Reformed Church, and Santee Institute of the Congregational Church in Nebraska; and the Tucson Training School of the Presbyterian Church in Arizona. It is not to be forgotten that the Roman Catholics have numerous boarding schools in which thousands of Indian young people are being trained for their church.

A few missions have been very successful in having normal Bible study, Christian Endeavor and Y. M. C. A. conventions and institutes which have been educational forces along religious lines. If the funds available will not admit of a larger number of schools conducted by the denominations, the method should be adopted of utilizing all of these opportunities for institutes, conventions and young peoples societies as well as the strengthening of the Sunday schools. It appears that approximately one-third of the Indian churches have no Sunday schools. This defect should be remedied.

In the federal and public schools there is a total of 58,000 pupils. The opportunity for religious instruction in these schools is within reach of the missionaries, and the assignment of the schools to denominations that can best care for the pupils in individual communities is an urgent need at the present time. The constituent Boards of the Home Missions Council have now been asked to indicate

whether they will give religious instruction in the Government Indian Schools within whose bounds they have resident ministers.

3. Community and social service and institutional church efforts should be organized to a greater extent. The Reformed Presbyterian Church for years conducted a very successful broom factory among the Apache Indians of Oklahoma. The glazing of native pottery to make it of commercial value, and the instruction in lace-making have been successfully accomplished on a number of fields. On the Navajo Reservation with its 31,000 Indians, corn grinding mills and wool scouring centres could be established greatly to the advantage of the Indians. The missionaries can co-operate with the federal and local forces to suppress liquor, peyote or mescal, tiswin and other evils that devastate reservation life. Christian physicians, Bible readers and field matrons are forces for community and tribal uplift in lines of service where Indian conditions present an appalling need. One Protestant medical missionary vaccinated 800 primitive and pagan Indians, treating 60 small-pox cases without a loss of one patient, within a period of a month last winter on the Navajo Reservation.

The strongest ministry for returned students is urged. These educated young people come back to the reservation demanding a higher type of church service than prevails among the illiterate adult Indians. They are often ready for Christian service, but they return to congregations in which there are no Sunday school teachers, no opportunities to serve as trustees, church treasurers or ushers, and often no students' clubs or young people's societies. A quickening of interest and of practical methods for reaching and holding the educated young people is called for more than ever at the present time.

4. A broad and comprehensive service for our united Protestant interests among the Indians is of very great importance. There is no mission work in the land so closely related to governmental affairs and requiring such representation at Washington, D. C. We will suffer untold loss if the opportunities are not seized and our interests followed up by constant oversight and conference with the officials of the Interior Department. Any comprehensive and statesman-like treatment of Protestant Indian interests calls for a constant recognition of government relations. This is a strategic hour in Indian life and progress. The Protestant

churches that have done so much in the past for Indian uplift are faced with a new opportunity, and are able to measure up to larger responsibilities and finer methods of service. A very large number of Indians have entered the army and navy, and ere long will return with new vision and energy. The church needs to be up-to-date and forward-looking in its comprehensive program and broad methods of community and social service in the name of Christ. We plead for a new binding together of our Protestant Mission forces and a systematic, alert development of this enterprise of making the native American race Christian through and through.

The Committee on Indian Missions submits the following recommendations:

1. In view of the large opportunities for religious work in the government Indian boarding and day schools, it is recommended that a committee composed of members of the Home Missions Council and the Council of Women for Home Missions be appointed to systematically outline religious work in government and also mission schools and the assignment to denominational oversight of all educational institutions not receiving proper care.

2. In view of the dire evils of the peyote habit and the mescal cult as revealed particularly by the hearing before the Sub-committee of the House of Representatives, February, 1918, it is recommended that the Council importune the Department of the Interior to take administrative action, so far as this is possible, pending legislative action, to curtail the evils of the peyote traffic and habit and to suppress the importation of the peyote into reservations as a menace to the health and morals of the Indians. The Home Missions Council again goes on record as urging legislative action as embodied in the Hayden Bill now in the hands of the Judicial Committee of the Senate of the United States, and expresses gratification at the favorable action of the House of Representatives on this measure.

3. The churches and missionaries are urged to hold the standard high among the Indians on all moral and ethical questions, such as are involved in the peyote habit and the mescal worship, dealing firmly but kindly with the Indians who have been led astray from Christian obligations by this insidious evil and perverted form of worship.

4. We again record our determined opposition to the administrative policy and the legislation which continue the sectarian contract schools, not under civil service regulations or regular inspection of the federal office, but provided for from public funds. In view of the removal of restrictions on building operations since the armistice has been declared and permanent peace is in prospect, we renew the urgent request to the Office of Indian Affairs, to expend the \$300,000 appropriated by Congress for Indian school buildings, thus removing the supposed necessity for contracting for sectarian schools, particularly in the Dakota Country.

5. We recommend that the Missionaries and National Boards investigate the defect in the Sunday school organizations in connection with Indian Missions and systematically provide for better instruction for the youth and children of Protestant Indian families and the unchurched Indians of our Country.

6. In view of the record made by the Indians in every line of patriotic service and loyalty to their country, we urge that citizenship be bestowed more rapidly upon the members of this native American race and that their civil status be determined as the National Society of American Indians and other organizations have petitioned.

(Signed)

THOMAS C. MOFFETT.
WM. T. DEMAREST.
RODNEY W. ROUNDY.
HENRY BEETS.
LEMUEL C. BARNES.

The Report was received and the recommendations adopted, with the exception of the first recommendation, for which the following was substituted:

1. It is recommended that a Joint Central Committee on Indian work be created; to be composed of three members of the Home Missions Council, to be selected from the Committee on Indian Affairs, three of the Council of Women for Home Missions and one each from the Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A.; this Joint Central Committee to be charged with the following lines of service:

(a) To co-ordinate as far as possible all Christian agencies working for the Indians.

(b) To conduct special studies of the need and results of religious education in schools, federal, public and mission.

(c) To take steps in systematically outlining religious work in these institutions, in formulating courses of religious education and in assigning definitely for religious oversight all institutions not receiving proper attention.

(d) At as early a date as possible to call a representative Conference on the united Christian program for the Indian people.

Pursuant to the foregoing action the following Joint Central Committee has been appointed:

Representing the Home Missions Council, Rev. R. W. Roundy, E. M. Wistar, and Rev. E. L. Mills.

Representing the Council of Women for Home Missions, Mrs. Katherine S. Westfall, Mrs. Tabor Knox, and Miss Edna R. Voss.

Representing the Y. W. C. A., Miss Edith M. Dabb.

Representing the Y. M. C. A., Rev. G. Elmer E. Lindquist.

To this committee there have been added by invitation, Rev. Thomas C. Moffett and Rev. Francis S. White.

Correspondence may be addressed to the Executive Secretary, Alfred Wms. Anthony, 156 Fifth Ave., New York City.

